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AUTHOR Neff, Franklin W.; And Others
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ABSTRACT

Attitudes of educational practitioners toward change processes associated with school improvement were assessed in a study conducted in a suburban midwestern school district. Eighty-nine teachers, principals, and instructional assistants from five schools completed questionnaires that were developed following classroom observations and interviews with selected faculty members. All the schools involved were engaged in at least partially successful change efforts, though not all schools were implementing the same new practices. This report presents the study's essential findings in six categories, the first four in roughly chronological form: starting the change process, selecting new practices, implementing the practices, evaluating the program results, relating the practices to other changes, and assessing the school climates involved. Among the findings were the following: (1) concerns about student outcomes were major factors in decisions to seek change; (2) principals, teachers, and instructional assistants were seen as having the greatest influence in decisions to adopt new practices; (3) the planning for, support for, and freedom to adapt the new practices were generally considered adequate; (4) the impact of the changes was regarded by most respondents as moderate; and (5) faculty members were interested in being involved in change efforts that were not overly demanding. Several tables are included. (PGD)

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OVER-ALL REPORT OF A STUDY DESCRIBING CHANGE PROCESSES IN SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

by

Franklin W. Neff

Ralph I. Parish

Mary Louise Weaver

The Institute for Human Development
and
The School of Education

The University of Missouri - Kansas City

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ABSTRACT

This research was part of a university research grant. Twenty teachers and administrators in five suburban schools were interviewed regarding their experiences with implementing new programs in their schools. Based upon the interviews, a questionnaire was developed which all of the teachers and administrators in all five schools completed. The resulting data provides a description of school level views of implementation and change.

Teachers do not trust central office or other outsiders when they recommend or assist with implementation of new programs. School members identify themselves as the ones who decide what will be implemented, continued, and what adaptations will be made. Others decide what will be adopted (tried). Teachers and administrator judgements are more reliable in determining the outcome and effect of new programs than tests, evaluations and other forms of assessment. Other data regarding change are described.

A Study Describing Change Processes in
School Improvement

I. Introduction

A great need has been expressed for more understanding of how change occurs at the level of the individual school where change in instructional practice actually takes place. It has been stated that more directly descriptive data is needed to tell us what is going on. This project was designed to obtain information which will be used by principals and teachers as they continue to work to improve their schools, and by the school district leaders in giving the support and help which can make a significant difference in changing schools.

The project was also intended to gain a better understanding about what affects efforts by school faculties to bring about change. Additional analysis of the data to pursue this goal will be disseminated through professional publications and appropriate professional meetings as well as to school district personnel.

This study was initiated by Dr. Frank Neff of the University of Missouri - Kansas City (UMKC) Institute for Human Development and Dr. Ralph Parish of the UMKC School of Education for the purpose of generating knowledge about school improvement processes and assisting school improvement efforts in the central school district of a midwest metropolitan area. Activity on the project began in the spring of 1984. At that time the researchers met with Central Office personnel to identify schools which would be appropriate to be included in the project. Schools which were invited to participate were reported to have observable change efforts underway.

The faculties were approached, and the selection process was completed in the fall of 1984. The project was discussed at a meeting with principals, instructional assistants, and representative teachers. The faculties in these schools were given an option to participate. Ultimately, of the five schools which were selected, three were in one cluster, and the other two from diverse parts of the School District. It is fitting to note here that it appears that the faculties in the schools that accepted the invitation to participate in the study viewed themselves as having made progress in change efforts. Faculties of the schools which participated received a small stipend to use in a project of their choice.

A minimum of seven teachers, the principal, and the instructional assistant(s) were interviewed in each school by the research team. Teachers to be interviewed were selected by random sampling, by grade level designation, or by the direction of the principal. Participation by school and by individual was completely voluntary, and confidentiality was assured.

Following the completion of the interviews, some classroom and faculty meeting observations were made. Relevant materials were examined. The research team, on the basis of this information, then developed a questionnaire which all teachers, principals and instructional assistants were encouraged to complete. Eighty-nine persons completed the questionnaires, representing 90% of those eligible.

The questionnaire data were then entered into a computer, evaluated, and analyzed by the research team. The information in this report combines the data from the five schools. The schools are not identified. (The information for an individual school will be shared with that site only if the faculties choose to participate in analysis of their data.)

It should be noted that the schools were not all involved in the same new school practice. This means that the people who responded were answering questions in terms of the change going on in their school, which may have been different from that in the other schools. Some of the differences found in responses to a given question may result from the differences in the new school practice about which people were responding.

The information obtained through interview and questionnaire has been organized in a manner which reflects the general flow of activity. The headings of the body of the report indicate the flow:

Starting Change
Deciding on a New School Practice
Implementing the New Practice
Impact and Evaluation of the New Practice
Relationship to Other Changes
School Context of Change

A final section on conclusions and implications completes the report.

II. Starting Change

Changes in the activities of schools generally start because there are concerns on the part of the people involved about the existing activities or about the consequences or results of those activities. To study this, the question was asked, "To what extent did concerns about the following stimulate interest in this school practice at your school?" The answers to this question are show in Table II-1 below.

Table II-1

Concerns Stimulating Interest in This School Practice

Concern	Percent Responding			
	Little or Very Little Extent	Some Extent	Great or Very Great Extent	No Answer
Student learning that their behavior has consequences	12	16	67	5
Student discipline	15	19	63	3
Student achievement	15	26	57	2
Student learning skills	19	25	54	2
Parent involvement in discipline	17	31	47	5
Student learning of social skills	18	29	47	6
Instructional practices	29	33	35	3
Faculty relationships	35	32	26	7
Parent involvement in homework	35	29	33	3

The table indicates that there was more concern about student outcomes than outcomes for parents or faculty. At least half of the faculty members in the five schools reported that, to a great or very great extent, interest in their school practice was stimulated by concerns about all but one of the student outcomes identified, that one being student learning of social skills.

A second matter of interest in starting a change in school practices is the extent to which the school faculty gave consideration to alternative approaches to dealing with the concerns. The question was asked, "To what extent did your faculty consider alternative practices (other than the school practice chosen) for dealing with the concern or issue?" These were the responses.

Little or Very Little Extent	Some Extent	Great or Very Great Extent
61%	24%	8%

The respondents indicated that solutions, other than the school practice finally chosen, were not considered to any great extent. Eighty-five percent reported that only some consideration or less was given to alternatives. Only eight percent responded that consideration was given to a great or very great extent.

A third matter of interest in initiating different activities is the extent to which the people involved see the proposed change in the same way. Sometimes school faculty members agree on a project name but may not have the same activities or outcomes in mind. Two questions were asked to explore this. The first asked, "As you understand it, what are the main characteristics of this school practice?" The responses ot this question were examined and divided into two categories. Tables II-2 and II-3 report these data.

Table II-2

Main Characteristics of This School Practice, Characterized as Goals, Outcomes, or Results

Responses	Number Giving the Responses
Improve parent, teacher, student relationships	16
Improve student behavior, student discipline	10
Reward for good behavior	9
Increase academic achievement	8
Positive and negative reinforcement	8
School climate improvement	6
Improve test scores	6
Parents share in student learning	5
Improve attendance	5
Establish teacher authority	3
Improve faculty cooperation	3
Pleasant learning atmosphere	3

These data suggest that there was little agreement on the main characteristics of the school practice. Examination of the responses indicated that different respondents interpreted the question differently, which contributed to the diversity of answers. In addition, the differences in school practices across schools may have contributed to the diversity. This same diversity is indicated by the results in Table II-3 as well.

Table II-3

Main Characteristics of This School Practice, Characterized as Process or Procedures

Responses	Number Giving The Response
Set consistent discipline practices	15
Writing rules for behavior and consequences	13
Homework folders; grade level	11
Practice/drill for students in reading/math	8
Teachers distribute/check in folders	8
Student responsibility	8
Parents check folders	7
Monthly school projects	7
Carefully planned program	6
Parents informed	5
Setting goals, expectations	4
Teacher responsibility/roles outside classroom/committee	4
Faculty implements program	4
Student knowledge of consequences	3
Teachers do not check work done	3

Another question asked,"To what extent did everyone in your school have the same understanding of the main characteristics of this school practice before trying it?" The responses are provided here.

Little or Very Little Extent	Some Extent	Great or Very Great Extent
16%	40%	40%

Thus, 40% of the faculty members reported that to a great or very great extent, people had the same understanding; while 16% reported that only to a little or very little extent was there the same understanding. With 40% in the middle category, it is appropriate to say that opinions differed on the extent of agreement.

A final question related to the initiation of a change was, "To what extent is this school practice different from what you were already doing?" Their responses, grouped into three categories, were:

Little Very Little Extent	Some Extent	Great or Very Great Extent
29%	38%	30%

Thus, 29% felt that, to a little to very little extent, the practice was different; 30% felt that, to a great to very great extent, the practice was different; and 38% felt that the practice was different to some extent. Thus, about two-thirds did not feel that they were involved in a change of great magnitude.

Summary

When people at school sites are asked to describe a new school practice, they will, more often than not, respond with information regarding (1) the reasons for doing the new school practice or (2) the outcomes that are desired from implementation of the new school practice. Clearly, teachers feel that the reasons they are asked to do something different is an important part of doing the new school practice.

It appears that, despite the diversity of responses just discussed, many faculty members reported that the new practice was understood the same by everyone. A majority, however, saw the similarity of views as limited (some extent or less).

Only 30% reported that the new practice was different to a great or very great extent. Thus, most found the new practice to be a limited change.

III. Deciding on a New School Practice

In much, but not all, of the literature regarding school improvement, consideration is given to the consequences of the decision to work

on a particular concern and to the processes by which that decision is made. In this project, during the interviews, many faculty members stated that it was very important to involve them in such decision making, preferably quite early in the process. A number also reported that they sometimes thought the school faculty was "the last to hear about it" when the change was initiated by the Central Office. Therefore, questions were developed for all faculty to answer on the questionnaire.

One of the questions asked on the questionnaire was, "How much influence did each of the following have on determining that this school practice would be done in your school?" Table III-1 presents the data.

Table III-1

Influence on School Decision To Do This School Practice

Source of Influence	Percent Responding			
	Little, Very Little Or No Influence	Some Influence	Much, or Very Much Influence	No Answer
Central Office	58	18	17	7
Instructional Asst	22	17	55	6
Parents	48	28	18	6
Principal	7	21	66	6
Students	48	21	23	8
Teachers	16	27	50	7
Others (University, Learning Ex., etc.)	54	11	8	27

As the table indicates, the faculties in these five schools see the Principal, Instructional Assistants, and Teachers as having the most influence on the decisions for their school to engage in the new practice in their schools. They also report Others, the Central Office, Parents, and Students as having quite limited influence, comparatively speaking.

This question was followed on the questionnaire by another which asked if that were typical for new practices in their school. Eighty-five percent said that that influence pattern was typical. This indicates that the faculty members see themselves as most influential, generally, in decisions on new practices in their school.

To understand better how individual school faculty members thought about the practice being considered for their school, this question was asked: "When you personally began to decide whether or not you were interested in trying this school practice, to what extent did each of the following influence you?" Faculty members had the opportunity to indicate the extent to which their own decisions were influenced by various factors. Table III-2 presents that information.

Table III-2

Influences on Individual Decisions Regarding Interest

In This School Practice

Influences on Individual	Percent Responding: Little or Very Little Extent	Some Extent	Great or Very Great Extent	No Answer
How it fits into your program	10	17	67	6
What principal & IA said about it	18	33	44	5
What research said about it	30	22	42	6
How much time it would take to do it	20	26	48	6
How important the subject or issue involved was	7	14	75	4
What schools that have tried it said about it	39	28	27	6

School faculty members reported that the importance of the issue and how well the new practice (would) fit into their programs had the most influence on their individual decisions. The least influence was attributed to "What schools that have tried it said about it." This last response is surprising, given that teachers are often interested in what other teachers have to say about new practices.

Summary

Respondents saw the decision to do their new school practice as influenced more by teachers, principal, and instructional assistants than by others. They reported that this was true for other practices as well. The things that influence them to the greatest extent in deciding whether to try the new practice were the importance of the issue and how it fit into their program.

IV. Implementing the New Practice

Among the matters considered in understanding the implementation of a new practice, three were studied in this project: planning and preparation, resources, and adaptation. Each will be discussed in turn.

A. Planning and Preparation

A common observation of students of school improvement is that there was not enough planning or preparation done to make it possible for the effort to innovate to succeed. In this project, two questions were asked specifically about the amount and adequacy of planning. The first was stated, "How much preparation and planning were done prior to trying out this school practice?" The responses were as follows:

Little, Very Little or None	Some	Much or Very Much
16%	29%	51%

The majority of faculty members reported that there was a lot of preparation and planning. Most of the rest reported that some was done.

The second question asked, " How adequate was the preparation and planning prior to trying out this school practice?" The responses are reported below:

Not at all Adequate, Not Too Adequate	Fairly Adequate	Quite Adequate, Very Adequate
17%	29%	48%

Again, nearly half of the respondents rated the adequacy of planning and preparation quite highly. Roughly one in six reported that those activities were less than fairly adequate.

Another part of planning and preparation is the clarification of responsibility for the various activities involved in implementing the new practice. Three questions were asked about the extent to which the specific activities of the principal, teachers, and instructional assistants were spelled out and understood by the school faculty. Table IV-1s reports that information.

Table IV-1

Clarity and Understanding of Roles

Specific Activities Clearly Spelled Out for:	Percent Responding: Little or Very Little Extent	Some Extent	Great or Very Great Extent	No Answer
Teachers	7	30	58	5
Principal	21	35	39	5
Instructional Assistants	31	28	36	5

These data indicate that the respondents saw the role of the teachers spelled out and understood to a greater extent than the roles of the principal and instructional assistant.

B. Resources

There are a variety of resources involved in the implementation of a new school practice. Questions were asked about resources and materials in general, adequacy of information, the sharing of ideas, effort, perceived sources of help, and the amount of help obtained. Each will be discussed.

To explore the availability of resources, this question was asked: "To what extent were the resources and materials necessary for success with this school practice readily available?" Respondents replied as follows:

Little or Very Little Extent	Some Extent	Great or Very Great Extent
12%	30%	55%

These data suggest that, for the majority, the resources for success were available. Most of the rest reported them available to some extent.

Turning to the adequacy of information, the question was asked, "How adequate was the information your faculty had about this school practice before trying it out?" Faculty members responded:

Not at all Adequate or Not Too Adequate	Fairly Adequate	Quite Adequate, Very Adequate
12%	37%	44%

Roughly four in 10 respondents rated the adequacy quite highly, while another four rated it fairly adequate. Only about one in 10 judged it less adequate.

Another question which is relevant to information concerns is the extent to which faculty shared ideas. On the questionnaire was the following question: "To what extent did the faculty in your school share ideas and opinions freely with each other concerning the trial of this school practice?" Here are the responses:

Little or Very Little Extent	Some Extent	Great or Very Great Extent
18%	36%	42%

The largest number of respondents, 42%, reported that ideas were shared to a great or very great extent. However, nearly one in five reported that sharing was quite limited. Recognizing that most respondents found the amount of change involved in the new school practaice to be modest, there may not have been much need for some to exchange ideas.

An important resource affecting change efforts is the human effort involved. In this regard, an item on the questionnaire asked, "How much effort did it take for you to give this school practice a full trial?" The respondents gave the following answers.

Little, Very Little or No Effort	Some Effort	Much or Very Much Effort
24%	43%	34%

About a quarter of the respondents indicated that the effort was rather limited. About a third indicated that much effort was required. Most of the rest reported that it took some effort. This spread of responses indicates that different faculty members had quite different experiences with their school practice.

Another matter of importance in understanding the implementation of new school practices is the help that faculty members get in trying out the practice. A question which looked into this asked, "To what extent did you go to the following persons for help when you were trying this school practice?" The data are provided in Table IV-2.

Table IV-2

Sources of Help In Trying the New School Practice

Sources of Help	Percent Responding			
	Little, Very Little or No Extent	Some Extent	Great or Very Great Extent	No Answer
Principal	48	24	21	7
Instructional Assistant	35	21	39	5
Another teacher in my school	27	30	37	6
Central office curriculum person	91	3	1	5
Learning Exchange person	88	7	1	4
University person	88	5	0	7
Other	34	5	6	55

These data indicate fairly clearly that the persons to whom faculty members go for help are within their own school. Even there, at least a quarter do not go for help to more than a little extent. On these new school practices, it appears that faculty members may go to instructional assistants and other teachers more than to the principal. These results are probably affected by the limited size of the change which these school practices were seen -- by the faculties themselves -- to represent. It is worth noting that sources outside the school were gone to for help hardly at all. A clarification of one entry in the table is important. The fourth source was labelled "Central Office Curriculum Person." At the time of this study, there were very few persons whose work fit that title. That fact may be one reason for the low extent to which respondents identified that source.

An appropriate follow-up to the question about sources of help was whether help was obtained when it was needed. This question was asked: "To what extent were you able to get the help you needed as you were trying out this school practice?" Here are the responses:

Little, Very Little, or No Extent	Some Extent	Great or Very Great Extent
23%	30%	44%

Just under half of the faculty members reported that they were able to get the help needed to a great extent or better. However, nearly one in four reported getting the needed help to a little extent or less. The faculty members are reporting quite different experiences in getting help.

In summary, faculty members generally seemed to have had at least some of the resources needed for implementing the new school practice. However, there was often quite a bit of variation among them in their views of the extent of those resources.

C. Adaptation

When a new practice is introduced to schools, the question of whether there can be adaptation of the practice arises. Some students of change in schools argue that there must be adaptation; others point out that adaptation may blunt or eliminate the impact of the change. Several questions in this study explored the matter.

One question asked, "To what extent were teachers allowed to make individual changes in the use of this school practice so that it could become adapted to their classrooms?" The data are provided below:

Little, Very Little or No Extent	Some Extent	Great or Very Great Extent
17%	33%	47%

The respondents indicate that, if they wished, teachers were relatively able to make whatever changes were necessary to assist with adaptations to individual classrooms.

Another consideration is whether it is necessary to make a change in the school practice. This question was asked: "To What extent was it necessary to make changes in this school practice in order for it to be accepted by the faculty?" The data are reported here:

Little, Very Little or No Extent	Some Extent	Great or Very Great Extent
51%	35%	7%

About half of the respondents found that changes were necessary only to a limited extent. About two in five found that change, to some extent or more, was necessary.

Knowing that, it is of interest to determine the extent to which faculty members actually made changes in the way they used the school practice. The question was asked, "How much change have you made in the way you use this school practice from the way it was originally explained?" The faculty members responded:

Little, Very Little or No Change	Some Change	Much or Very Much Change
42%	42%	12%

These data indicate that the faculty members, for the most part, did not make a lot of change in the practice, even though (as reported above) they generally thought they could.

Summary

In reviewing the information on adaptation: change was possible; most thought that little change was necessary; and only about one in ten made much or very much change.

V. Impact and Evaluation of This School Practice

The consequences of school improvement efforts are important. No one wants to invest time, energy, materials, and concern into activities which produce no benefits. Therefore, assessment of the effects of improvement activities is important. Several questions were developed for the questionnaire to explore the impact of the change efforts.

One question dealing with the impact of the change efforts asked, "As far as you know, to what extent is this school practice being used by other teachers in your school?" The school faculty responses are provided here:

Little, Very Little or No Extent	Some Extent	Great or Very Great Extent
3%	29%	68%

About two-thirds of the people responding said that it was being used to a great of very great extent. Only three percent said that it was being used to a little extent or less. The remaining 29% said that it was being used to some extent. Thus, nearly everyone reported that the practice was being used to some extent.

Turning to the impact which the new practice had on the way things are being done, three similar questions were asked:

To what extent did this school practice cause changes:

in the way you do things in your classroom?
in the way students do things in your classroom?
in the way things are done in your school?

The answers given to these questions are shown in Table V-1. These responses show that faculty members appear to see more change in students and in the school than in their own work. Interestingly, the percent who gave the answer "some extent" is quite similar across these items, ranging from 43 to 47. This also suggests that most respondents do not see great changes resulting from the school practice.

Table V-1

Changes in Teacher, Student, and School Ways of Doing Things

This School Practice Caused Changes in:	Percent Responding: Little or Very Little Extent	Some Extent	Great or Very Great Extent	No Answer
The way you do things in your classroom	36	46	15	3
The way students do things in your classroom	27	43	27	3
The way things are done in your school	16	47	34	3

To have a basis for determining whether a new practice has had an impact, it is necessary to collect information. Faculty members were asked, "To what extent have the following been used to evaluate the effectiveness of this school practice?" As the data in Table V-2 indicate, faculty opinion and teacher experience and judgments were used to a much greater extent than other data sources.

Table V-2

Data Sources To Evaluate This School Practice

Data Source	Percent Responding: Little, Very Little or No Extent	Some Extent	Great or Very Great Extent	No Answer
Achievement tests	42	27	24	7
Conference cards	45	26	17	12
Criterion referenced tests	54	25	7	14
Faculty opinion	16	23	60	1
Parents' comments and feelings	29	30	36	5
Principal and instructional assistant checklists	28	28	36	8
Student attendance records	40	25	26	9
Students' comments and feelings	32	33	28	7
Student grades	29	33	32	6
Teacher checklists	28	27	36	9
Teacher experience and judgments	15	24	57	4
Teacher tests	39	27	20	14

Relatively objective data sources, such as criterion referenced tests, conference cards, chievement tests, attendance records, and teacher tests are reportedly used to a rather limited extent.

School improvement efforts are expected to have specific consequences as well as more general ones. School faculty members were asked to report the extent to which this school practice improved student achievement, discipline, and a number of other things. Table V-3 provides that information.

Table V-3

Improvements From This School Practice

Extent To Which This School Practice Improved:	Percent Responding: Little or Very Little Extent	Some Extent	Great or Very Great Extent	No Answer
Student Discipline	24	36	38	2
Student Achievement	21	46	31	2
Student Learning Skills	25	37	37	1
Student Learning of Social Skills	25	38	34	3
Students Learning That Their Behavior Has Consequences	20	26	49	5
Faculty Relationships	39	32	24	5
Parent Involvement in Homework	41	35	21	3
Parent Involvement in Discipline	30	35	32	3
Instructional Practices	26	39	32	3

The respondents were more likely to say that Student Discipline and Student Understanding That Their Behavior Has Consequences improved to a great or very great extent than they were likely to say that about Student Learning Social Skills, Faculty Relationships, Parent Involvement in Homework or Discipline, and Instructional Practices. They were more likely to say that Student Achievement and Student Learning Skills improved to a great or very great extent than to say that Faculty Relationships, Parent Involvement in Homework, or Instructional Practices improved to a great or very great extent.

It should be noted that the different projects may have created greater improvements in a given area in one school than in another. Thus, parent involvement may have been more central in one school than in another or even in several others. Nonetheless, this across-the-schools look indicates the general effects of the new school practices in these schools as seen by faculty.

Another matter of interest to the evaluation of a school

improvement activity is whether the new approach is likely to continue. In the interviews, when asked if the program would go beyond next year, a majority agreed they hoped it would but they did not voice a strong feeling that it would definitely continue. Also, in the interviews, they stated, generally, (in response to the question, "What would happen if the principal or some key person left?") that they thought it might be internalized enough by teachers that it would continue, but that the principal was a key factor in the success of the school practice. School faculty members were asked, "Will you be using this school practice next year?" Eighty-nine percent said "Yes", 5% said "No', and the rest did not answer.

A second question (on the questionnaire) concerning the likelihood that the school practice would continue into the future asked, "To what extent will this school practice become part of the way things are done in your school from now on?" The responses from faculty members are shown below.

Little, Very Little, or No Extent	Some Extent	Great or Very Great Extent
6%	28%	63%

Sixty-three percent said it would to a great or very great extent. Only six percent said that it would to a little extent or less.

The final question in this regard asked, "To what extent does your school have a specific plan regarding how people new to your school will learn this school practice?" Respondents were divided, roughly, into the three (combined) response categories as follows:

Little, Very Little or No Extent	Some Extent	Great or Very Great Extent
36%	29%	34%

Thus, about a third gave each of the responses indicated. The views on this are, therefore, rather divergent.

Summary

The new practice is being used. It has caused more change in the way things are done in the school than it has on the way faculty members do things. The most extensively used sources of information on the improvements comes from teacher opinion, experience, and judgment.

Faculty members report that most of the improvements from this school practice are in students, especially their understanding that their behavior has consequences and student discipline.

Nearly nine our of every ten respondents expects to be using the school practice next year, and nearly two-thirds expect it to become

part of the way things are done in their schools from now on to a great extent. These practices may be on the way to be being "institutionalized." However, data to be presented later indicates that new school practices have not continued to be part of the school program to a great extent.

VI. Relationship to Other Changes

To understand some of the conditions and events which may affect the process of change, questions were asked about faculty experiences on programs which had been started in the past and things which may affect how people react to proposals for change at this time.

During the interview process of this project, faculty members frequently stated that there had been many new programs introduced into the District in the past few years but that few had survived. Therefore, questions were included in the questionnaire to determine what impact a faculty's experience with other changes made in the District might have on future change process.

One of the questions asked was, "Based upon your experience, how often have new school practices that have been adopted in the past continued to be part of the school program?" The response is given below.

Little or Very Little Extent	Some Extent	Great or Very Great Extent
33%	49%	13%

A small percentage felt that new programs have been continued to a great extent, but over eight out of ten saw them as continuing only to some, little or very little extent.

A second question was asked relating to this issue. "To what extent would you agree that teachers have been involved in so many programs during the past few years that they are very cautious about having new programs in their classrooms?" Their response follows:

Little or Very Little Extent	Some Extent	Great or Very Great Extent
13%	25%	62%

With almost nine out of ten agreeing to some, great or very great extent, the implication is that they may approach future change with a cautious attitude.

The third question, "To what extent do you think that most teachers today try whatever new programs administrators want, regardless of their own opinions, because they feel their job is at stake?", was answered as follows:

Little or Very Little Extent	Some Extent	Great or Very Great Extent
24%	32%	42%

It is important to note, based on these data, that personal concerns such as job security may play an important part in some teachers' attitudes toward future change.

When presented with this statement, "Teachers are usually willing to adopt new programs that make things simpler and do not require a lot of time to learn," 90% responded that it was true.

In this report it is important to note that we are dealing with data from the faculties of five schools where the teaching experience in the School District of those responding to the survey (N=89) is represented by the following percentages.

Less Than 5 Years	5-9 Years	10 Years and Over
28%	16%	56%

The fact that almost three fourths of the teachers have been with the District for five years or more may have significance in their responses to the above questions. One implication being that prior experience with change programs may be an influential factor in the attitude toward and acceptance of change by faculties.

These data could suggest that teachers may have come to view their participation in change as something they must do if they are to keep their jobs, and/or as something they will do if it makes things simpler and doesn't take a lot of time to learn. It could further suggest that they may be reluctant to invest a lot of time and effort in new programs because, as indicated by their response to the first question asked, they believe a new school practice may not be around long, based on their past experience.

Previous studies seem to bear out a similar conclusion: Faculties are willing to try new things if they fit into their classroom, simplify procedure, and do not take a lot of time to learn. It may be important to be cognizant of these factors when new programs are proposed. (This does not mean that changes which do not fit easily should not be attempted. It does mean that different strategies will be needed and that more effort and other resources will probably be needed. See the material on the "right" involvement in change in Section VII, the School Context of Change, below.)

Teachers expressed a desire in the interviews to be involved early in decision making and in selecting programs appropriate to their school's needs. To ascertain the impact of the source of the program, the question was asked in the questionnaire, "To what extent is each of the following true for school practices which come from the Central Office?" The results are shown in Table VI-1.

Table VI-1

Perception of School Practices Which Come From the Central Office

Statement About The Practice	Percent Responding			
	Little or Very Little Extent	Some Extent	Great or Very Great Extent	No Answer
Concerns important issue or problem	44	34	20	2
Well-designed for this school	56	29	13	2
Material helpful and available	48	37	13	2
Instruction of faculty well-done	46	36	16	2
People explaining the practice understand our school	54	33	11	2
Time for faculty to learn & discuss before using it	54	30	14	2
School receives support needed to use practice	54	32	12	2
Constructive feedback to faculty on efforts	59	25	12	2
Faculty feel rewarded for trying it out	68	19	10	3
Schools have option to use it	66	17	11	6

These data indicate that faculties generally have rather strong feelings about a practice which comes from the Central Office, with about seven out of ten not feeling rewarded for trying the practice out, and not feeling they were given an option to use it. Six out of ten do not feel they receive constructive feedback on their efforts on such practices.

These data can be compared with other findings in this study that indicate more positive feelings on the part of faculties toward the implementation of new school practices that are generated in the schools themselves on the basis of need, appropriately designed objectives, and voted on by the faculties.

Summary

The implications from the data in this section of this study seem to be that, despite their past experience relative to change in the District and some reluctance to try new things, they are willing to try those things that are easy to learn, don't take a lot of time, simplify things and fit into their classrooms. These, coupled with their strong statement of desire to be involved in the decision-making and selection of programs for their schools, suggests the need for the appropriate levels of faculty participation in future change, major or minor.

VII. School Context Of Change

Others who have studied school improvement activities have suggested that some schools have a climate which supports change. In this study, an effort was made to learn about the school context in which the change process took place. Four related questions were asked.

The question, "How easy is it to get your ideas for change considered in your school?" was answered as follows:

Not At All or Not Too Easy	Fairly Easy	Quite or Very Easy
40%	41%	19%

The response to the question, "To what extent does your school climate encourage teachers to try new things, even if it is uncertain how they will work out?" was as follows:

Little or Very Little Extent	Some Extent	Great or Very Great Extent
31%	33%	36%

These data indicate that faculty members hold very divergent views.

When asked, "In your school, when information is given on new school practices, to what extent is opportunity given to ask questions and offer suggestions before decisions are made?", the responses were as follows:

Little or Very Little Extent	Some Extent	Great or Very Great Extent	No Answer
26%	34%	39%	1%

Nearly 40% report that opportunity is given to a great extent or more. About one-quarter say to a little extent or less.

The faculties were also asked, "To what extent do creative new programs come from faculty and grade level meetings in your school?" They responded thus:

Little or Very Little Extent	Some Extent	Great or Very Great Extent
38%	36%	26%

On this question, nearly 40% report that creative programs come from school meetings to a little extent or less, while about a quarter report to a great extent or more.

The faculties' perceptions of "school climate" is assessed in Table VII-1 below where the question was asked, "To what extent are the following true now for your school?"

Table VII-1

Conditions Existing in Your School Now

Existing Staff Conditions	Percent Responding: Little Or Very Little Extent	Some Extent	Great or Very Great Extent	No Answer
Feel work is important	13	20	67	0
Feel they can change achievement regardless of student background	16	31	53	0
Support given in professional development	25	34	41	0
Important issues dealt with in faculty meetings	33	30	37	0
Working to eliminate weaknesses in school	23	24	53	0
Read, share, discuss educational literature	34	43	23	0
Suggestions for dealing with major problems openly made & shared	27	28	45	0
Assisted and supported in improving performance of students	25	25	47	3
Staff strengths identified and maximized	29	25	43	3
Sense of cohesiveness, working together	24	27	48	1

The greatest percentage in the five schools, 67%, felt that their work was important. A little more than half believed they could really make a difference in student achievement, regardless of student background.

However, when asked, "To what extent is student achievement affected by things outside the school over which the faculty has no control?", 57% said it was was true to a great or very great extent. They do appear to believe they can make a difference, however.

Approximately one half report that, to a great or very great extent, the faculty is presently working to eliminate weaknesses and that there is a sense of cohesiveness.

Only four out of ten feel that issues important to teachers are dealt with to a great or very great extent in faculty meetings and less than three out of ten stated that their staffs read, share and discuss educational literature to a great or very great extent.

Here again the data imply that faculties may not presently consider themselves fully involved or sharing in issues and decisions that affect them.

We asked faculties to indicate the amount of influence they felt they and others should have over improvement efforts. Table VII-2 reveals the data in response to the stated question, "How much influence over improvement efforts <u>should</u> each of the following have."

Table VII-2

Desired Influence Over Improvement Efforts in Your School

Source of Influence	Percent Responding			
	Little or Very Little Or No Influence	Some Influence	Much or Very Much Influence	No Answer
Central Office	38	39	17	6
Instructional Assistant(s)	16	29	52	3
Parents	10	43	44	3
Principal	1	18	79	2
Students	9	43	44	4
Teachers	0	9	89	2
Others (University, Learning Ex., etc.)	38	32	10	20

Nine out of ten faculty members feel that teachers should have much or very much influence over improvement efforts in their schools. Principals are next with eight out of ten, followed by Instructional Assistants with about five out of ten. Forty-four percent believe that students and parents should have the same level of influence. They believe Central Office and others, such as the University and the Learning Exchange, should have much less influence.

Faculties, when asked, "When the teachers in your school vote to try out a new practice, to what extent is that binding on all of you?", responded as follows:

Little or Very Little Extent	Some Extent	Great or Very Great Extent
7%	35%	56%

Over half (56%) said to a great or very great extent. One might question whether or not faculties would feel more committed to a faculty decision if they felt they had more in-depth involvement as mentioned earlier.

With this focus on involvement, we felt it important to obtain a definition of involvement from the faculties; so we asked them to identify the elements of participation that they believed to be the "Right amount of involvement for this school practice" and for "a major change in instructional methods." Table VII-3 reveals these findings.

Regarding the new practice in their school, the greatest percentage (64%) wanted to be involved in "Evaluating this school practice." The second greatest (62%) wanted to "Vote on it before starting it." Third, 60% chose "To Discuss it fully with your faculty." Fifty-seven percent selected "Implementing this school practice in my classroom." Fewer (30%, 27% and 18%) desired to "Work on the school site committee", "Present information to your faculty", and "Lead the decision making process."

In the second column of the table, the percentage of responses is reported regarding "the right involvement regarding a proposal for a major change in instructional methods" Their responses to this question were similar to those given on the previous question. The responses about "Evaluating this school practice" and "Voting on it before starting it" were tied with the highest percentage (65%). "Identifying the goals and objectives for your school" ranked second with 63%. "Going to a workshop about it" followed closely with 60%. "Working on the School Site Plan Committee" and "Leading the decision making process" were seen as least important with 29% and 19%, respectively.

It appears that teachers see the principal rather than themselves as leading the decision making process. One conjectures that the majority of faculty members do not see their involvement in the Site Plan Committee as effective a spot for their voice to be heard as a faculty meeting where they would discuss and vote on an issue.

Table VII-3

Activities Representing The "Right Involvement"

Activities	Percent Choosing The Activity for This School Practice	Percent Choosing The Activity for Major Change
Working on the School Site Plan Committee	30	29
Working on the committee to help start this school practice	35	34
Getting information from other places about it	54	53
Going to a workshop about it	52	60
Identifying the goals and objectives for your school	53	63
Presenting information to your faculty	27	30
Discussing it fully with your faculty	60	56
Getting my ideas and opinions really considered	55	52
Leading the decision making process	18	19
Voting on it before starting it	62	65
Supporting the decision	48	51
Implementing this school practice in my classroom	57	58
Evaluating this school practice	64	65

Although results were quite similar in most categories, there may be a significant difference between the involvement they saw as necessary for this school practice and the "right" involvement if major change were to occur on the item about "Identifying goals and objectives for your school." They apparently did not see as great a need for involvement on this matter for the current project (school practice) as they do for a major change. With less than one third reporting "Working on the School Site Plan Committee" as a priority for

involvement, one wonders whether or not they see the Site Plan Committee as an appropriate vehicle for identifying goals and objectives.

It is worth noting that faculties want to be heavily involved in evaluating the practice as a follow-up to voting on the school practice before starting it and identifying goals and objectives.

Summary

These data seem to indicate that, although they do not respond strongly (at a great or very great extent), the majority of faculty members believe they have at least some opportunity to ask questions and offer suggestions, (seven out of ten) and that their ideas are given some consideration (six out of ten). Six out of ten said these ideas for new programs presently came out of faculty and grade level meetings to some, a great extent or a very great extent. They further feel (seven out of ten) that they are encouraged, at least to some extent, to try new things.

Faculty members believe their work is important and that they can make a difference in student achievement. However, one in three report that important issues are dealt with in faculty meetings to a little extent or less. They say the same about reading, sharing, and discussing educational literature.

They think that teachers, principals, and instructional assistants should have the most influence over improvement efforts in their school. While over half think that faculty votes are binding to a great extent, about one-third say such votes are binding only to some extent.

Concerning involvement, faculty members reporting wanting to participate in goal-setting, to evaluate and vote on a new practice, to get their views considered, and to learn about it. They less often report wanting to be involved in committees, in presenting information about new practices, or in leading the decision making process.

VII. Conclusions and Implications

This section will provide a highly abbreviated review of findings and will identify some possible implications for school change efforts.

A. Review of Findings

Initiating

The largest concerns stimulating the change had to do with student behavior and achievement, not faculty or parent activities. Not much consideration was given to other school practices than the one chosen to deal with the concerns. There was a diversity of opinions about the elements or characteristics of the practice chosen. Many thought the new practice was not greatly different from what they were doing before.

Deciding

The major influences on the school's decision to use the new practice were the teachers, principal, and instructional assistants. This is typical of decisions on new practices. Important influences on individual decisions to try the practice were the importance of the issue, how it fit the person's program, the time it would take, and the views of the principal and instructional assistant.

Implementing

About half thought that there was a great deal of planning and that it was quite or very adequate. Most thought the role of teachers was spelled out to a great extent; fewer thought that was true for principals and instructional assistants. Most thought resources and materials needed were available to a great or very great extent. About 40% thought information about the practice was quite or very adequate and that faculty shared ideas concerning the trial of the practice.

The principal sources of help were in the school - the principal, instructional assistant, and other teachers. Nearly 75% reported getting the needed help to some extent or more.

Although nearly half thought teachers were allowed to make changes in new practices to a great extent or more, half said that it was not necessary to make big changes to get acceptance of the practice. About 40% reported actually making little change or less in the practice.

Evaluating

Over two-thirds reported the new practice being used to a great or very great extent. About 15% reported that it changed their ways to a great extent or more, and one-quarter to one-third reported change in student and school ways of doing things to a great extent or more.

They reported improvements to a greater extent in student behavior and achievement than in faculty or parent activities. The improvement which seemed to be most extensive was student learning that their behavior has consequences. Over 60% expect the practice to continue next year to a great extent or more.

Relating to Other Changes

About one-third reported that, in the past, new school practices continued to a little extent or less; only 13% said to a great extent or more. Over 60% reported that teachers are cautious about new practices (because so many have been tried over the years). Over 40% said teachers tried them because their jobs are at stake.

New school practices which come from the central office are viewed rather negatively. Over half said that the practices were not

well-designed for their school, that people who explained the practices did not understand the respondent's school, that there was not time to learn, that the school did not receive support nor constructive feedback, that
teachers did not feel rewarded for trying them out, and that there was no option about using them.

Describing the Context

Responses to a series of questions about matters which affect school improvement processes varied quite a bit. Positive comments were made by 19% to 67%, and somewhat negative comments were made by 13 to 40%. Half or more said that staff members felt their work was highly important, that they can affect student achievement regardless of student background, and that staff are working to eliminate weaknesses in the school.

About a quarter or less said that creative ideas come from meetings (to a great extent or more), that staff read and share educational literature, or that it was easy to get ideas for change considered.

Regarding the kinds of involvement wanted around change, from 50 to 65% wanted it in regard to voting whether to use the new practice, discussing it fully, evaluating it, identifying goals and objectives for it, implementing it in their classroom, going to workshops about it, getting their opinions considered, and getting information from other places. On the other hand, faculty members did not want extensive involvement in committee work nor other leadership functions.

B. Implications

Turning to implications, these things could be noted:

- These school practices represent relatively minor changes. The findings may not fit for major changes.
- Improvements reported were mainly on the matters of concern which stimulated the change efforts -- student behavior and achievement.
- Faculty are more willing to make changes which are less demanding. It may be important to note that research indicates that more demanding change efforts are likely to bring more improvement.
- These faculty members think that the most influence on decisions about school practices should be exercised by teachers, principals, and instructional assistants.
- Faculty views regarding new school practices coming from the central office were rather negative.

- Faculty members indicated that one of the kinds of involvement important to them was voting on a practice before starting it. Research indicates that strong, consistent, supportive leadership may be more important than early faculty involvement.